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“THE PURPLE TESTAMENT OF BLEEDING WAR”

When early in the month of August last the rude hand of Mars tumbled to the earth the card structure of a European peace reared so assiduously on a “scrap of paper,” the world, especially the American world, was profoundly shocked in its usual shallow newspaper way. The possibility that war could break out in the most civilized quarter of the globe, that it could spread through the wildfire of alliances to the Far East, and that it could lay its ruthless hands on American credit and trade had seemingly never occurred to a people building two battleships a year and clamoring for more. Having provided a splendid palace at The Hague in which Universal Peace could while the hours away, it was pained to find that a blundering diplomacy had let it wander out and get shot. In its new-found indignation at war, America, and our concern is chiefly with America at present, forgot that it had come up through war to freedom, that through sheer war it had cast that gracious mantle on all its people regardless of race or color, and that by grim war it had consecrated the closing years of the past century, shedding the blood of the nation that the voice of Liberty might be spoken to an alien people. At once, editorially and pulpitorially, in officialdom and privatedom, by troubled prose and turgid verse, it cried out on war as a thing accursed, unknown, and hated of man. To it the wrath of a nation had suddenly become a crime against God, or, with apologies to the present, what is still left of Him; a crime against commerce, and in fact a crime against nearly everything in the category of life except the extra newspaper, the illustrated magazine, and the moving picture.

This, of course, was quite to be expected. It has been the habit of the “thinking human,” especially the modern counterpart of him, to carry his thoughts around in a convenient, ready-to-assimilate, and perfectly pre-digested state, guaranteed to fit all occasions. At the first sign of war, therefore, all that was necessary to permit him to express his righteous indignation and join the chorus of respectability was the bringing forth in print of all those old salves to a God-fearing but war-making conscience

that have enriched the sum of our languages in the past. Turning to the card index of his truisms and bringing out the whole array from the blunt "War is hell" of General Sherman to the more exquisite "Bella! horrida bella" of Virgil, he was therefore free to read with the greatest avidity and interest the latest news from the front. Having so righteously condemned war he could piously exercise more joy over the description of one gun that could fire 450 rounds a minute and kill at a distance of 2,000 yards than he could over the news of the ninety and nine wounded soldiers that were saved to their country by the service of an improved surgery. The attitude of the World and His Wife at the spectacle of a world war is eminently like that of a devout but sport-loving clerical at the ringside. It offers to the thoughtful observer a lovely contrast of shocked respectability and delighted enthusiasm, evidenced alternately by a pharasaical "Isn't it horrible?" uttered over the teacups, or a "What! thirty thousand of the butchers killed in one battle? Good, that's the way to kill them off!" ejaculated over the morning headlines. Or perhaps it may be likened to the annual parental pilgrimage made to the circus on behalf of the children. It would have you understand that while it reads the battle news eagerly it does so only because it is necessary to keep well informed.

To this proletariat display of delightful human inconsistency, let us add for emphasis the further refreshing spectacle of such noted peace advocates as the genial Andrew Carnegie and the gentle Maurice Hewlett rising to defend the present war as necessary to crush militarism. Confronted with this amazing spectacle, we cannot resist the impulse to rise right up in meeting to ask the world of peace advocates, editors, and propagandists whether the happy faculty that permits the peace-prating portion of mankind to view the present war with such complacency does not betoken the fact that the peace movement is, after all, only ink-deep. One portion of mankind can see in the present war only the sublime spectacle of militant England, warlike France, armed Russia, and martial Japan rising *en masse* to strike forever off the earth—or at least that portion of it known as Germany—the shackles of a self-imposed militarism. The other portion, by

perverse optical illusion that needs much gunpowder to clear its vision, can see only the reassuring sight of Germanic culture rising by sheer weight of the Krupp gun and the fourteen-inch cannon-ball superior to the variety of that medium of thought exchange made in Petrograd. With this dual view of the righteousness of war spread out before us, and the hollow cry of "Let there be peace!" rising from our excited sanctums, surely we may be pardoned if before we too raise our pen in holy horror at war, we pause for the moment to inquire whether it may not be, after all, a most essential element to human progress.

Pursuing, then, this inquiry, with no intent to glorify the arrogant exercise of arms or deprecate the just appeal to battle, we observe that from the beginning there have been three major influences that have told most heavily on the life and progress of man. These have been Religion, Love, and War—the appeal of the dim unknown, the appeal of embodied sex, the appeal of red-blooded action. From the days immemorial, his God or his gods, his altogether Beloved or his harem, his Country or his chieftain, have been the chief rallying point of man's uncertain emotions. Whether savage or savant, ancient or modern, peasant or aristocrat, the Altar, the Nuptial Bower, and the Field of Battle have stood out in bold relief on the background of his more prosaic life. Peace has been the golden intermediary, but peace has been the routine, not the adventure of life. So it has been till of late, when a change, perhaps happily transitory, has been stealing over the ways and traditions of man.

In an age of paper the card index of the scientist has triumphed over the breviary of the saint. Careless indifference or growing irreverence has smothered the fires of a Religion, and man no longer goes to his lone home lighted by her gentle rays. Religion, in short, has become through a painful process painfully conservative—and this is not an age for conservatism. While man has neglected the altar, woman has escaped from the bower. Between the "New Woman" and the "New Feminism," eugenics and suffragism, sex hysteria and the problem play, there is little of the old romance left. Love has been led far afield from the rose-covered bower of happier days until it bids fair to

die at last of sex exposure out on the cold bleak pages of some sixth best-seller. Too much analysis has made it beside itself and decidedly out of place. In truth, in these days of sex turmoil with the ever reiterated cry of "Sex, sex, sex," and continuing challenge of "Woman, woman, woman," the little blind god had been far more fortunate, and perhaps popular, had he long ago lost his hearing as well as sight. As a reading public we have learned to prefer as our heroine the doubtful character who, unscathed by countless appeals to the virtuous life, rises triumphant over them at last to a knowledge of bridge, the cigarette, and the vote. We have long ago refused to number among our literary acquaintances her gentler sister clothed with the sweet womanly attributes of the earlier romancers. Is it any wonder then that Love, like Religion, languishes for the traditions of the fathers?

Finally, to come to War, which belongs more naturally within the compass of our present discussion, we note in our general survey that it too has been arraigned before the bar of the present and found guilty. Yes, guilty not only of killing men, for it can no more escape that charge than the invaded householder, but what is far worse, of disturbing their commerce and appropriating their gold. It's too bad, as a matter of course, for the "poor devils" to get killed, but it's even worse that the factories need be closed while they are doing it. It is actually getting so that war is almost as bad as a strike. Moreover, this is an age of dancing and not of fighting, and who ever heard of a crippled soldier being able to do the tango? It follows, then, that the dancing-masters of an unstable public opinion are highly confident that the hue and cry they have raised against war will result in the banishment of Mars from the seats of the mighty. War will be legislated out of existence. Human nature will be changed by enactment. Strife, physical strife, will cease and in its place will be the "psychological substitute," or the legal contention. It will then come to pass that man, that ancient peace-loving barbarian, will dwell peacefully at last in a perfectly godless, loveless, spineless, but thoroughly arbitrated world. Such are the allurements of the future. So promise the prophets of peace.

We doubt it. War is dynamic. Peace is static. Life is a composite of the two forces. The whirl of human destiny, like the whirl of other life, is a constant endeavor to attain an equilibrium in itself never attainable. All the shiftings of the mighty winds, the rushings of the angry storms, and the wandering of the surging elements have never produced and can never produce the equilibrium of conditions that would make climate thereafter static. All the wars of jarring nations, the trade jealousies, the onward rush of the sciences, the tireless round of human activities have never attained and presumably never will attain to that happy equilibrium where the dynamic energy of man can be reduced to the static terms of peace. A balance presupposes repose, and there is no repose, lasting repose, in either the life or heart of man. There have been, there may be great periods of apparent peace. But be not deceived. Underneath, deep hid as human motives and human destinies can sometimes be, there are great forces working, just as there have been great forces working under the apparently peaceful surface of current European history. Years may pass, decades, but sooner or later these forces will disturb the pseudo-equilibrium of a universal peace, and the hoarse cry "To arms!" will rouse the nations from their pleasant dreams. And were it not better so? Were it not better, viewed from the scheme of things as they really are, for nations to live the dynamic existence of the May-fly rather than endure the static but insensate repose of the rock? Can men, can nations, be false to their racial instincts, yet true to the laws of their natural being? Can artificial precepts supplant the living impulse?

"But," says the peace advocate, "we are living in an age when the refinements of the mind and not the cruder impulses of the heart govern the conduct of man. The issues of the future will be settled by the logic of reason and not by the brute strength of force." Flattering as these words are to our mental superiority, may we believe them? Is the appeal to reason, then, of more efficacy than the appeal to religion, which could teach all men to say "Our Father," and yet permit them to slaughter in mutual hatred? The age, or rather the series of ages that acknowledged the Prince of Peace as their guiding divinity,

carried on war under the very Banner of the Cross. Is it not stretching our waning belief, then, to expect the age that has relegated Him to the rôle of an "historic personage" to accomplish that which was in truth the very lesson of His teaching? Can the refining influence of modern skepticism perform a greater achievement than the fear of God was able to accomplish in the past? Can the sweet concert of bills of exchange and tariff schedules, the noon-day blasts of factory whistles telling of countless girls protecting a slender virtue on the strength of ten hours a day and the munificent wage of six dollars a week,—can these in dulcet unison effect more than the love of the Christ in the age of faith?

Were the years of the Christian Era bloodless years, warless years? Far from it. Wars, religious wars, political wars, crusading wars, internecine wars, court wars, trade wars! History is so full of them during this one period that they almost crowd the image of the gentle Jesus off the page of the world's attention. The three most prominent things on the pages of the stately Gibbon are the succession of schisms, the succession of kings, and the succession of wars. In an age when the voice of the Vatican was the voice of Rome, the dominating factor in world politics, peace was a mere delusion of vassals, a restless truce, or the trick of intrigue. Can it be expected, then, in an age when there are no fusing fires of a common religion to melt the heart into brotherhood, or make the lure of gold and the appeal of "pigsty comfort" less attractive? Men fought with zest in the days when the Spaniard went into battle with the cry of "St. Jago" on his lips, or the sterner Parliamentarians rallied to the deep-throated "God our strength." Shall they fight the less from a moral restraint when the only cry they could carry into battle would be that of the Swiss doubter, "Oh God, if there be a God, save my soul, if I have a soul." The Biblical assertion that "there shall be wars and rumors of wars" carried sufficient excuse to permit a troubled Christianity to indulge in its tender mercies in the past. The first Christian emperor went into battle with the Cross on his banners and further encouraged doubting faith with the heavenly vision of the wayside. Nor has it ever been said to the common knowledge that *in hoc*

signo vinces was unscriptural. In the face of such a promulgation, is it not idle to expect the promise that men "shall beat their swords into ploughshares" to carry of fulfilment in the days when it has been reduced to the status of a well-rounded literary quotation,—a quotation, be it added, slightly ornate in an age of realism and severe rhetoric.

History, the collective record of mankind, can from its very nature be compelled to adduce almost any fact in support of almost any argument. Accordingly, in a period like the present when it is being bruited around in print and conversation, the common prey of all, it does not create a court of last resort by appealing to its volumes. Granting the truth of this modification, the serious student cannot deny that an appeal to its volumes establishes the fact that, whatever its cost, war has yielded a fair and a largely unsuspected tribute to man. It has been the channel down which the current of his history has largely flowed. It has been the crucible into which his dispersed knowledge has been poured for the welding. Under the banner of the invader, the enemy, the conqueror, have marched foreign knowledge and alien resources. Through the deadly contact of battle has come the living contact with the arts and sciences. Mars has been the explorer as well as the conqueror of the earth. His grim batteries have levelled racial differences as well as embattled ranks. Now that the swarms of the earth have settled into their respective places, perhaps this agency is no longer required, or admitting the necessity, modern invention and commerce could supply it. Yet in the earlier days when each tribe and nation jealously guarded its own peculiar legacy of knowledge, the service of war in uniting the scattered elements into one common heritage cannot be too highly estimated. Nor was its service limited to a mere diffusion of knowledge. The sword of the Roman created the *Pax Romana*, and the latter paved the way for the spread of a primitive Christianity as well as a genius for government. Without war in the past, there has been but little real peace. Without peace there has been but little real progress. The war of a Napoleon changes the destiny of a world; the bickerings of a savage tribe perpetuate but feud. The one, decisive, makes for real history;

the other, purposeless, makes for futility. Such is the paradox that history delights in, strange as it may sound to the modern ear; for as Lowell has aptly phrased it,—

Civilization does git forrid
Sometimes upon a powder-cart.

Opening the volumes of history in a still further search, we are struck by the fact that the leading nations of more recent times, as well as the leading nations of antiquity, have been those nations that could wield the sword as well as exercise the pen. It is a favorite saying with the opponents of war that the nations that live by the sword must perish by the sword. The correct teaching of history, if it be possible for it to really teach us anything, is rather that the nation that cannot live by the sword must perish *of* the sword. Nor in support of this teaching need we summon merely the melancholy examples of a conquered Carthage or a desolated Palmyra. Could the power of the intellect unaided by the sword have saved Greece, the very nursery of human thought, from the brute strength of the Persian hordes? Could the mere bucolic pursuits of peace have sufficed to move the "deep-browed" Homer to those bursts of song that animated ancient Greece and still vibrate the responding hearts of men? Could Rome, the city that conquered the world, have conquered by her genius for organization had it not been more ably seconded by her genius for things martial. Would Rome the decadent have yielded to Goth and to Hun, to Alaric and Attila, had she not long before discarded the armor and the ardor of her imperial youth?

To quote from more recent sources, is it a mere empty coincidence that the nations to-day occupying the eminences of power, intellectual, commercial, and political, are the nations the best trained in the art of war and the most ready to indulge in it at the call of national necessity? Spain at the martial period of her history could summon levies that were able to vanquish the Moors of the South or the veterans of the North. Can decadent Spain arm the peace advocate with renewed argument when he contrasts that proud period of her history with her present fallen rank in both the economic and political scale of

nations? Has her abandoned sword yielded her greater progress and prosperity than that enjoyed by the fighting nations of to-day, some of whom have kept their fighting edge since the days in which they were her rivals and not superiors? Turn to the Orient and contrast apathetic China with the warlike Japan, and see what a lesson there is in a pusillanimous peace. The one with her bursting millions, her almost inexhaustible resources in the units of humanity, lies prostrate at the feet of designing statesmen, financiers, and world-plotters, a veritable mammoth of huge helplessness. The other with her inferior numbers rapidly rises to the first rank in the family of nations, challenges the Occident in successful war, secures an outlet for her enconfining people, and demands the respectful or timorous friendship of all. Has the burden of a so-called militarism oppressed the rise of Japan, or its absence permitted China the populous to take her rank with the sons of the morning? Men speak of the burdens of war. Do they not know that the burdens of war are sometimes light in comparison with the impositions of a helpless peace. Were the taxes of the Romans heavier to bear than the ravages of the Huns? The armor of the Roman soldier may well have tried the strength of a robust man, but at that was it not light when compared with the yoke of the effeminate Egyptian fellah?

The peace movement, grateful as it is to the finer instincts, is for the present an unquestioned danger to the lasting welfare of man. Exerting as it does an opiate influence on the fever of world politics and inherent jealousies, it blinds both state and citizen to the dangers still confronting by the pleasant dreams, but only dreams, that it provokes. In the progress of civilization the individual man has been stripped of his arms and committed to the care of an enrolled police. The adequate protection to which his life and his property are entitled is provided by the state, but where is the power that can police the nations? Is it the Hague Tribunal with the shock of the present European war almost rattling the very panes of its noble edifice? Is it the power of a public opinion that can best express its "higher neutrality" by a violent partisanship apparent in every utterance? Is it the good-will of a nation that while frowning

on war and breathing arbitration sells submarines to one nation and ammunition to another? No! it is the power inherent in every nation—the appeal to the strength of its sword. Whether the “State is Might” is a question for a Treitschke. The practical man is satisfied to know that it can exercise its might if need be. It is not the wild freedom of the remote bounds that needs the most stringent regulations and the most ample police force. It is the great cities of the nations, the centres of population like New York or London, that must incessantly call on their police. So by a just corollary of facts is it that the great nations of the globe, whose lots are cast in the crowded portions of the earth, must by the strength of their armaments provide their bounds and their peoples the just protection which is considered the moral right of the private citizen in local matters. The Ten Commandments have never yet taken the place of the police, and even to-day a dreadnought is a more effective argument than a seal on ribboned paper.

Peace, yes, peace so far as possible and when possible, but never peace at any price. Better the folly of militarism, a folly that can learn an early repentance, than the folly of disarmament, a folly from which there could be no recovery. In no partisan spirit we point to the fact that those who have been the loudest in their condemnation of German militarism have been the foremost in their praise of the heroic Belgian resistance. Yet this animated resistance, which is justly entitled to the admiration of the world, was nothing more or less than applied militarism of a highly efficient character. Its fortresses, its rifles, and its trained army of nearly a hundred thousand men, as well as its native courage, gave to Belgium that stout resisting power which even the most orthodox peace advocate must admire. Whether Belgium could have declined the unequal contest with honor is a question for perhaps statecraft or casuistry to decide. Sufficient it is for the point of the discussion to add that while men are men and homes are homes, few there are who would wish their country to do differently under similar circumstances. Peace, yes, it is well to talk of peace and even to achieve it, but as long as the nations who join battle produce men and not merely bales of cotton or kegs of butter and cheese, we need

not go into hysteria at the very mention of war. Nations as well as men profit by a little buffeting at times.

The sufferings and horrors of war! Perhaps only the headlines can do this justice, but has not peace her sufferings as well as war? It is natural for man to breathe a sigh of pity over the very picture of a wounded soldier. He delights in doing it at the sham spectacle of a staged grief even though it costs him two dollars for the privilege. But the same man will grant with grudging reluctance an Employer's Liability Act to compensate those who are torn and mangled and maimed in the peaceful pursuit of the world's manufactories. Yea, the hurry call of the casualty ambulance bearing some stricken worker to the ward of death, ring insistently as it may in his ears, will hardly induce him to remove the legal restrictions that lie so heavily on the rights of the injured toiler. He can even forget the injustice and suffering all around him, while he breathes most loudly and fervently cries of protests over the cruelties and horrors of a foreign war. In his grief at the very thought of war the mere mention of it may be so distasteful to him that it will cause him to forget altogether to contribute to some Red Cross relief fund. Perhaps at such a time he will affirm that charity begins at home, but even there he has a growl for this "continual begging." Yes, the sufferings of war are very real, very cruel, and very hard, but what else are the sufferings of life?

Suffering, aye suffering! But when once that moment comes in which the fear of suffering and pain guides the destiny of the world, then may we well surrender the rights of creation. When from the fear of pain we would banish from the earth the just danger signal of imperiled nature, then should we cease to call ourselves men. Better the hardships of the camp than the boredom of an empty life. War may thrust and maim and cripple, but, thank God, it does not produce ennui either of soul or body. In its rough camps are born and nurtured those virtues that sink into supine nothingness in the easy depths of a Morris chair. The piping times of peace may batten humanity, but we in America are abundant proof that they do not make it either virile or contented. Only then does Socialism, the most potent protest against exploitive wrong, raise its questioning

voice to disturb, perhaps necessarily,—for it is not our function to settle the question,—the economic relations and fellowship of men. In the stirring days of war when an armed enemy appears on the distant horizon, Socialism, Suffragism, and all the hollow round of intranational pettiness and pettishness are drowned by the larger call of patriotism. At such a time we forget the landlord and remember the home. In such a crisis the red flag of class hatred furls itself under the red banner of war.

Death? Ah, who shall gainsay death? But is death limited to the battlefield? Do we shun the chamber of slumber because within its walls comes the final sleep to the major portion of a wearied, worn-out mankind? Death! aye war has death and wounds, sufferings and horrors, but is it not still true that,—

“War slays its thousands, peace its ten thousands”?

And was not man born to die? Think you that we must all develop into stuffed pigs whose highest excitement is the neighborhood movie, and noblest aim the “world series,” simply because if as men we engage in war under the call of honor, we may perchance happen to meet with death? How many men are there to-day, groaning under the burdens of peace, who toil away in dark room and narrow confine with their only reward in the hope that they may be permitted to toil to-morrow and the next day? To how many of these men, in whose ears there must still ring above the bitterness of life some of the world-old echoes of bravery and daring, would it be a soul relief if for once, for only once in their narrow lives, they could go out like men and face death in the open. Aye, face it for kith and kin, for country and all that appeals to man. Face it with comrades in heart and not jealous-eyed competitors eager for their places, knowing that if they fell it was sweet and glorious to die for their country. How many men are there, underlings in a world of underlings, who would gladly stake their little all on one supreme moment of endeavor, willing if the worst came to the worst to sleep out there in the open, under the stars, with only the peace of God, resting, brooding over them in the watches of the night? Think you not that there are men left who would

prefer this to a routine existence and a six-by-eight death-chamber, with Poverty and Want as the chief mourners? War, horror, death? Even so! But better a world in arms than a people in stagnation. Better, far better, the Red God of War than no God at all. Better, if need be, a glorious death than a futile life.

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